DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 195 EA 019 671

AUTHOR Ribich, Frank M.; Debenham, Adaria Ruey
TITLE Maximizing Accommodations for Learning Disabled Students in the Regular Classroom Setting.
PUB DATE Jan 87
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; *Administrator Role; Educationally Disadvantaged; *Equal Education; High Schools; *Individualized Education Programs; *Learning Disabilities; *Mainstreaming; *Special Education Teachers
IDENTIFIERS Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

For a mainstreaming program to be effective, students should be able to experience success in a regular classroom with the enhanced self-image that accompanies a positive experience. Maximizing classroom accommodations for learning disabled students can help improve these students' access to educational opportunities and increase the probability of their success. This paper describes a mainstreaming program at a high school in the Moon Area School District in Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania). All regular educators at the high school can be involved, depending on students' course choices. About 50 regular teachers work with 50 special students in any given year. The process involves a team effort among the special education teacher, the regular classroom teachers, and administrators. The special education teacher, using diagnostic aids and data from the students themselves, formulates the necessary accommodations and includes them in students' individualized instructional programs. The regular teacher uses these accommodations to provide instruction while maximizing the learning situation and evaluating students' progress. The administrator then monitors what was promised as part of the individualized programs. Three essential steps to implementing the accommodations process are described at length. The key to success is cooperation and effective communication among the educators involved. (MLH)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

# Maximizing Accommodations for Learning Disabled Students in the Regular Classroom Setting

Frank M. Ribich, D.Ed.

Adaria Ruey Debenham, M.Ed.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Frank M. Ribich
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED287195

Participants in mainstreaming understand only too well the challenges and demands inherent in the practice. In the final analysis, although Federal and state guidelines and requirements point the way, it is at the individual school district level that mainstreaming fails or succeeds as a viable option in educating special education students. For a mainstreaming program to be considered effective, the mainstreamed students should be able to experience success in a regular classroom with the enhanced self image that accompanies a positive experience. Maximizing the use of accommodations in the regular classroom setting can be a significant factor in 1)providing access to equitable educational opportunity for the learning disabled student and 2)increasing the probability of his success. The organizational pattern and process described here could be used by all learning disabilities teachers involved in mainstreaming students into regular classroom settings. It has the potential to offer maximum benefits to the learning disabled students involved, as well as to the regular education teachers, administrator(s), and special education teachers. The benefits include: time-saving, accuracy, empathy, respect, efficient program planning and implementation, more accurate student evaluation, the likelihood of a more successful experience for both students and teachers, and a better relationship among the students, the teachers in the regular education classrooms and the special education teacher.

CE 047 671



January 1987

The program which operates in the Moon Area School District is an entirely intra-district program. The process described here is used by the learning disabilities teacher in the itinerant services program at Moon Senior High School. Moon Area School District is a suburban school district outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with 378 studetns enrolled for 1986-87. Nine hundred sixty-one students are enrolled at the high school for 1986-87. The diagnostic and accommodations processes have evolved over a nine-year period. All regular educators at the high school can be involved, depending on the students' course choices. Approximately 50 regular teachers work with the approximately 50 students in the program in a given year. There is a full-time teacher's aide. The process involves a team effort among the special education teacher, the regular education teachers and the administrators in the school district. Each of these professionals has a separate, but necessary role in the teamowrk process.

The special education teacher, employed by the school district, formulates the accommodations and includes them in the student's I.E.P.'s. The recommended accommodations are based on information derived from the psychological examination which diagnoses the handicapping condition; observations of the student during formal and informal diagnostic testing by the L.D. teacher; other sources of information, such as the regular teachers, nurse, parents, and others. One of the richest sources of data is the student himself. It is critical to the success of the process that the student be involved in assessing his needs, attitudes, and his environment.

The role of the regular educator in this process is to utilize the accommodations when providing instruction and evaluating instruction in order

to maximize the learning situation for the student as well as to more fairly evaluate the student's understanding of the material learned. The accommodations process enables the regular teachers to more fully appreciate the support services provided by the L.D. teacher and to more actively participate in the teamwork which is so necessary.

The administrator involved has the very important role of monitoring what was promised as part of the I.E.P. He has the administrative authority to insure that the process is in fact put into practice. Administrative involvement and support are essential to the well being of a smoothly functioning communications network.

There are basically three steps to the accommodations process. First, the L.D. teacher mails a confidential form letter with an accommodations page for each L.D. student to each regular education teacher who has an L.D. student enrolled in a regular education class. The letter accomplishes three purposes: (1) It identifies the L.D. student or students enrolled in that particular teacher's class (without referring to the specific handicapping condition); (2) It provides a copy of the accommodations page attached to each students' I.E.P.; and (3) It serves as an invitation for the regular education teacher to meet with the L.D. teacher for a dialogue regarding the students' learning styles, achievement levels, strengths and weaknesses, etc. The dialogue ultimately serves to refine and make specific what is needed by the student to experience success in the regular classroom.

Eight specific accommodations or adaptations for regular classroom use are listed on the form as well as another possibility listed as "other."

Part of the form reads:

Modifications should be made in the following areas:

___ only part of the course content to be required

___ content of course of study to be changed

___ student-teacher contract to be used

___ instructional materials to be altered or changed

___ special education teacher to provide back-up instruction

___ tests to be read to student

___ tests to be changed

___ course to be audited

___ other:

The L.D. teacher check marks the appropriate accommodations for each student. The "other" section varies for each student based on the nature of the handicapping condition. For example, it might read: "Other: Seat the student at the front of the classroom, if necessary. He should be permitted to have access to class notes when necessary. Do not give tests presented orally in a regular classroom setting. The student may take tests in the untimed setting of room 230, if necessary."

The second step in the process is communication between the regular and special educator which continues in meetings throughout the year as needed. The communications network is basically informal, one-to-one, and most likely initiated by the regular or special teacher during the work day in mutually shared situations such as lunch, corridor duty, in the halls, signing in, etc. When more time is necessary, the meeting occurs at the end of the school day. It is important that the regular teacher understand that the

student can have L.D. support help with the L.D. teacher every school day when necessary.

The third step is the key to the practical application of this process. Initially, an administrative decision is made that an accommodations report from will be sent home with the L.D. student's report card. This becomes a part of district policy. The teachers are notified by a memo from the administrator in charge of special education, or if none is available, the superintendent of schools. A form letter signed by the appropriate principal is sent to the teachers at the end of each marking period asking them to check the accommodations that were made for the student in the regular course. The accommodations list matches the list used with the I.E.P. accommodations form. The principal's form letter indicates when the completed accommodations forms (one for each student the teacher has) are to be returned to the special education teacher who then distributes them to the students when report cards are distributed. A copy of the accommodations form is also filed with the student's I.E.P.

It is the cooperation and teamwork among the regular educator, the special educator and the administrator that maximizes the benefits of the use of accommodations for the L.D. students in the regular classroom. The process presented in this paper would benefit any school district contemplating using its own intra-district program for mainstreaming. Logic would dictate that the accommodation is a necessary component of the I.E.P. for maximum benefit to the L.D. student. It should be used whenever necessary during the educational process since the student is learning disabled throughout his school day and not just when he is with his special

education teacher. Because the team approach makes success for the student possible, those training administrators whould also be preparing people to thoroughly understand the importance of providing a method of enforcing what is necessary for the student to have access to equitable educational opportunity in the school setting.